Checklist for Easy-to-Read Materials

Scope, Content, and Organization

- ☐ Is the intended audience obvious? Are they at risk for low literacy?
- ☐ Is the scope limited to 3-5 key points most readers will want to know *at the time they are reading the piece*?
- ☐ Does it answer the needs and interests of the readers?
- ☐ Does it answer questions *the audience does not have?*
- ☐ Does the information include *only* what the readers *must know* to carry out the recommended action? (Remember, "If in doubt, leave it out."
- ☐ Is the information in the order readers will expect to find it?

Writing Style (Is it Plain Language?)

- ☐ Did the writer use the conversational language of the readers, active voice, and a friendly tone?
- ☐ Does it focus on "do-able" behaviors and "how-to" information
- ☐ Does it use mostly 2 syllable words and sentences of 10-15 words to address reading level
- ☐ Is the amount of jargon limited? Are new words and new concepts explained in context with concrete examples?
- ☐ Are acronyms explained or avoided?
- ☐ Are the sentences straightforward, simple, and clear?
- ☐ Is the writing directed *to* readers? Or is it about readers?

Readability

- ☐ Is the text written at 6th to 8th grade reading level or 4th to 5th grade reading level if the audience is at risk for low literacy skills?

Graphic Design and Layout

- ☐ Is the amount of text limited to <50% of the space on each page?
- ☐ Is sans-serif font used only for titles or headers, if at all? (This is serif. This is sans serif)
- ☐ Is the main type at least 12 to 14 point in a serif font?
- ☐ Is the text in upper and lower case letters vs. ALL CAPITALS?
- ☐ Are key points emphasized with bolding, different typeface and/or larger type vs. underlining and italics?
- ☐ Is there a sharp contrast between ink color and paper? Is reverse text avoided?
- ☐ Is the text "left justified"? (Left margin is straight right margin is ragged.)
- ☐ Is line length between 3-5 inches or 30-50 characters (& spaces)
- ☐ Does the piece use headings, subheadings, and bullets to guide readers and "chunk" text? Are headings simple, clear, and near their text?
- ☐ Is color used to create interest and draw attention?

Visuals

- ☐ Are visuals simple, appealing, meaningful, and culturally relevant?
- ☐ Do visuals help readers understand the text and get the message?
- ☐ Do visuals show the action readers should take?
- ☐ Are illustrations/photos realistic, uncluttered, and related to one point?
- ☐ Are charts simple, easy-to-use, and limited to information readers *must know* to carry out the recommended action